FORT MCDOWELL

FORT MCDOWELL, EAST GARRISON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (Fort McDowell, Eest Garrison, Building No. 16)
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Marin County
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HABS No. CA-2721-G

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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Perk Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Weshington, DC 20240

ADDENDUM TO:
FORT MCDOWELL, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
(Building No. 16)
Angel Island State Park
Angel Island
Marin County
California

HABS CA-2721-G CAL,21-ANGEL,2G-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FORT MCDOWELL, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (Fort McDowell - East Garrison, Building No. 16)

HABS No. CA-2721-G

Location: Angel Island, Marin County, California

Present Owner: California State Parks

Present Occupant: California State Parks

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Administration Building at Fort McDowell was part of a major

building campaign during 1910-1914 to create permanent improved facilities at the Depot of Recruits and Casuals, later known as the East Garrison. Like the other buildings constructed simultaneously such as the mess hall, post exchange, and officer's quarters, the Administration Building featured a reinforced concrete structural system and Mission Revival architectural forms and decoration. Using stone quarried and crushed on site and convict labor from Alcatraz Island Military Prison, the army was able to create fashionable architecture for an acceptable cost.

The Administration Building provided office space in a modern,

permanent structure, moving the administrative work of the post out of

older wood structures adapted for this purpose.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1910-July 1911

2. Architect: Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington, DC

3. Original owner: U. S. Army, 1910-1946

Subsequent owners: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1946-1963

California State Parks, 1963- present

4. Builder: Lieut. Col. R. B. Turner, Constructing Quartermaster, with mainly unskilled convict labor from Alcatraz Island Military Prison and a few skilled supervisors and workmen

5. Original plans and construction:

The exterior of the Fort McDowell Administration Building largely retains its original appearance. It is a two-story, reinforced concrete structure, five bays wide and two bays deep, with a one story entrance portico across the center three bays of the front elevation. The Administration Building has a Mission Revival appearance with smooth concrete exterior walls and a red terra cotta tile roof. Original drawings of the Fort McDowell Administration Building were located in "Plans for Standard Army Post Buildings, 1903-10," an unpublished volume filed in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.. Although only labeled "Plan No. 253 - Administration Building," the drawings clearly illustrate the Fort McDowell structure.¹

6. Alterations and additions:

Changes to the Administration Building include additions to the rear elevation, new window openings, and altered interior partitions. Army records indicate that in 1918 a nine by fourteen foot room was added. However, the location of the new room is not specified. Currently the wall between the post office and toilet on the first floor is different than the 1909 plans, creating an odd, narrow hall into the toilet. Perhaps this additional space in the post office is the "added room." A major frame addition was added to the rear elevation in 1926, although it has since been demolished. This two-story addition was ten by forty-five feet. At this time four windows on the rear elevation where enlarged into doorways. In 1928, the partition wall between two of the rear offices on the first floor was removed, leaving only the chimney stack section. Also, a new

¹"Plans for Standard Army Post Buildings, 1903-10," National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 77 Office of the Army Corps of Engineers (hereafter RG 77), Entry 412, Volume 1. It is not clear whether this volume illustrates plans used at multiple army posts or simply examples of typical building types constructed at individual posts. All of the other administration buildings illustrated were much larger structures with Georgian Revival motifs.

exterior window was cut through the southeast wall of this room. Another window was added through the interior partition wall between the hall and the former center rear office.²

Currently the foundation of a larger concrete addition is located at the rear of the Administration Building. An exact date for its construction and demolition has not been determined. It is not indicated on a sketch plan from May 4, 1942. A thin partition used to create an additional private office in the east corner of the large second floor room is indicated on this plan. The top half of this partition is glazed, presumably to allow supervision of the personnel clerks working in the larger space.³

B. Historical Context:

The site of the East Garrison was used by the army as a Detention Camp for soldiers returning from the Phillippines with contagious diseases. Tents and temporary wood buildings were erected and the camp ready for occupation on September 16, 1899. A few months after the Detention Camp closed, Colonel Frank M. Coxe, Chief Paymaster, Department of California, suggested using the site as a discharge camp to remove returning troops from the temptations and vice readily available adjacent to the Presidio in San Francisco. From late November 1901 to July 1, 1902, 10,747 returning soldiers were processed at the Fort McDowell Discharge Camp and paid a total of \$3,356,354. The administrative duties were performed in a variety of temporary wood buildings and tents.

By 1904, the Discharge Camp became the Depot of Recruits and Casuals, changing and increasing the duties performed at Fort McDowell. Camp Reynolds at Angel Island and the Presidio in San Francisco had functioned as recruit depots, providing initial training and forwarding the new soldiers to their assigned posts. The processing of recruits was now consolidated at Fort McDowell and all enlisted men returning from the Philippines or Hawaii for discharge, furlough, retirement, or transfer were sent to Angel Island for

²Historical Record of Public Buildings, Fort McDowell, Angel Island, Building No. 16 - Administration Building, (includes photograph from April 1929, plans dated March 5, 1928 showing proposed changes, and c. 1929 floor plans) NARA, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 142, Folder 3. These records and plans indicate another new exterior window in the southeast elevation in the second floor of the same bay, also installed in 1928. However there is no physical evidence to suggest this window was ever actually added.

³Historical Record of Public Buildings, Fort McDowell, Angel Island, Building No. 16 - Administration Building - Revised, (includes photograph from May 1942 and sketch floor plans dated May 4, 1942), NARA, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 142, Folder 2.

⁴Captain John P. Finley. "Discharging a Philippine Army, Part One" Sunset Magazine 9:5 (September 1902): 293.

processing.⁵ An Inspector General's report from 1904 described the recruit depot as a sub-post of Fort McDowell housing three companies - the Thirteen Infantry, a casual (temporary) detachment, and a detachment of constantly changing recruits. However since the new duties of the recruit depot were not immediately accompanied by new, permanent buildings, the report noted that improvements were needed to the "crude" buildings.⁶

By 1909 the colonel in charge of the Depot expressed frustration regarding the long-term "temporary" status of his post:

The place itself creates the most unfavorable impression on the men who are sent there for enlistment, and a number of cases have arisen where men have refused to enlist because they thought that they would have to spend their time of enlistment under the same conditions as those existing there. There is also dissatisfaction among the men of the two companies constituting the regular garrison, on account of the miserable buildings in which they have to live. This dissatisfaction has manifested itself in the refusal of men to reenlist, and a number of very desirable men has [sic.] thus been lost to the companies constituting the regular garrison of the depot.⁷

Just a few months later the War Department decided to build a permanent Recruit Depot at the East Garrison. Regular line troops were removed from Angel Island and replaced by recruit companies transferred from other posts. This shift included deactivating the gun batteries on the island, which had been at caretaker status for several years. The first recruit company arrived on June 5, 1909. The new commanding officer was Major Thomas B. Dugan, formerly commanding the General Recruit Depot at Fort Slocum, New York⁸

From July 1909 until February 1910 building plans and a site layout for the East Garrison

⁵John Soennichsen. Miwoks to Missiles: A History of Angel Island. (Tiburon, CA: Angel Island Association, 2001), 151.

⁶Memorandum to Quartermaster General from Inspector General (14 May 1904), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 4414, File No. 204868.

⁷13th Endorsement, Depot of Recruits and Casuals, Angel Island (17 February 1909), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 5333, File No. 226460.

⁸John A. Hussey, "Fort McDowell - Report on Application for an Historical Monument," Prepared for War Assets Administration (April 1949), typescript in Angel Island Park files, 27.

were being developed by Lieut. Col. J. B. Turner, Constructing Quartermaster at Alcatraz and Angel Islands and the Construction Division of the Quartermaster General's Office in Washington, D.C.. In addition to the administration building, the concrete buildings built in this campaign included a post exchange, barracks, guard house, mess and drill hall, hospital and officer's quarters. The administration building was one of the first to be constructed, probably because of the administrative function of the post. Because drawings of the administration building are dated January 1909, before the official decision to build a permanent Recruit Depot at the East Garrison, it is unclear whether this building was designed specifically for Angel Island. Perhaps the plans were prepared in anticipation of the permanent Recruit Depot or they were for a non-site specific building. Some versions of the site plan for the permanent Recruit Depot show a different, larger footprint for the proposed administration building, indicating that other designs were being considered.⁹

Stone was quarried and crushed on site to provide concrete for the new buildings. The construction was done by military prisoners from Alcatraz Island, with the assistance of a few skilled civilian workmen. Actual construction of the administration building seems to have started sometime during the middle of 1910 and proceeded quickly. On June 30, 1910, \$73,850 was allocated from the Quartermaster General's Barracks and Quarters appropriation for construction of twelve officer's quarters units, the guardhouse, and the administration building.¹⁰ An inspection report from October 12, 1910 described the progress of construction:

There are 200 prisoners now on the construction work at Angel Island, and Col. Turner stated that in about 60 days he expected to put 100 more there, so that then the work will progress more rapidly, altho' it is now progressing as rapidly as could be expected. Post Exchange is almost completed; one barrack up to the foundations and wall and first floor is in; and the field officers' set, one four-set officers' quarters and the Administration Building are well under way, and on the day that I left they were about to start the second four-set of officers' quarters.¹¹

⁹A series of topographic maps of the Recruit Depot site in the Cartographic and Architectural Branch of the National Archives illustrate the evolution of the site plan for the new buildings from August 1909 to February 1910. See "Angel Island, California," NARA, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, RG 92, Blueprint File, Sheets 3, 5, 6, 11, 17, 16, and 15.

¹⁰Appendix A - Annual Report of the Construction and Repair Division for Fiscal Year 1909-1910, NARA, RG 92, Entry 1058, Box 1.

¹¹Inspection Report, (12 October 1910), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6756, File No. 278885.

Army records indicate that the administration building was completed in July 1911 for a total cost for \$7,075. 12

On August 17, 1911, the commanding officer of the Recruit Depot reported transfer of the structure from the Constructing Quartermaster. A number of problems related to the size and layout of the building were described to the Adjutant General:

The building is deficient in that there are no rooms for telephone exchange and telegraph office and quarters for operators; that there is no storage space for bulky and infrequently-referred-to records of which there is a large quantity here; that the postal space is too small for the operation of an established post-office; that there is no space provided for a printing office. The question of providing for these necessities is taken up in a separate letter, today. 13

The other August 17, 1911 letter suggests making space in the planned mess hall building for all of these functions. The commanding officer elaborated on the inadequacies of the post office room in the administration building:

No provision has been made for these necessities in any of the plans except a so-called post-office in the administration building. It is believed that this was not intended for use as an established post office but was intended for use in distribution of official mail. The postmaster here often handles 2000 pieces of mail daily. The office is a money order and registry office and handles considerable amounts of money. It serves the Quarantine Station and will, no doubt, serve the Immigration Station. The little room in the administration building is not large enough to accommodate the safe and other fixtures necessary. The location of a general post office in the administration building, which has only one entrance, is objectionable because of the very large number of men that would be constantly visiting it.¹⁴

These complaints indicate that the Administration Building was not planned to

¹²Building Record, Building No. 16 - Administration Building, NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 7000, File No. 305307. This form also lists Q.M.G.O. plan no. 253.

¹³Letter to Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. from Recruit Depot, Fort McDowell, California, (17 August 1911), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 7221, File No. 326418.

¹⁴Letter to Adjutant General, Washington, D.C. from Recruit Depot, Fort McDowell, California, (17 August 1911), NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 7221, File No. 326418.

accommodate the functions of a recruit depot. To compensate, alternative facilities were created and the administration building gradually changed. A separate one-story wood frame post office building was constructed next to the Post Exchange in 1918.¹⁵ The print shop was housed in a small space in the Post Exchange (see report HABS No. CA-2721-H).

The January 1909 drawings for the administration building indicate the original room designations that raised the above complaints. The small post office room on the left of the central entrance hall was equipped with a window and counter facing the hall, but the space was clearly inadequate for handling mail for thousands of recruits and casuals. Proceeding clockwise past the toilet and staircase, the records room in the south corner was only fourteen by fifteen feet. Continuing clockwise, the other rooms on the first floor were the Sergeant Major and clerks office, adjutant's office, commanding officer's office, and one small unassigned office. The most of the second floor was one large open space labeled "Court Martial." A fourteen by fifteen foot office in the south corner was labeled "Summary Court."

However the duties of a recruit depot generated large quantities of personnel paperwork, and subsequently the administration building was adapted and altered for these purposes. The 1926 rear addition created a thirty-four by ten foot file room and a ten by nine post office on the first floor and a one room for a "Discharge Office" on the second floor. These spaces were directly accessible from the exterior, the second floor via an exterior staircase. In the main building on the first floor the large office in the rear center was used as a file room with the smaller south corner room being used as the Sergeant Major's office. The second floor was used by the "Pay Section," another personnel administration function. In 1928 removal of the partition wall on the first floor between the Sergeant Major's office and the file room to the northwest created one larger space for the file clerks. The c. 1929 plans indicate that the original post office at the front of the building was now the Sergeant Major's private office.

Later changes to the administration building reflect the continued increase of troop traffic. By the late 1930s, U. S. military activity had increased in response to the European war. Clearly more facilities would be needed to accommodate the growing number of replacement troops being processed through Angel Island. To meet this demand in February 1941 the former Immigration Station became the North Garrison of Fort McDowell. Existing buildings such as the administration building were renovated and new barracks constructed. The office in the east corner of the large second floor room was added during this period. Although Fort McDowell processed large numbers of

¹⁵Historical Record of Buildings, NARA, RG 77, Entry 393, Box 143, Folder 4.

¹⁶Hussey, 28-29.

troops during the war and demobilization period, by mid 1946 the expense and inconvenience of maintaining the island post was deemed unnecessary. The War Department declared the island and its installations surplus to the War Assets Administration on September 20, 1946.¹⁷

In 1948 the Department of the Interior assumed responsibility for Angel Island, and many proposals for establishing a park or developing the island were considered. In 1954 the Quarantine Station area of the island became a state park, but the East Garrison returned to military use with the establishment of a Nike missile base. The small garrison assigned to the Nike missile was housed in the hospital at the East Garrison. Finally in 1963 the East Garrison became part of Angel Island State Park, after the Nike base closed in 1962.¹⁸

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: The Fort McDowell Administration Building is a reinforced

concrete structure designed with fashionable Mission Revival features such as a red terra cotta tile roof with exposed notched rafter ends. The smooth finish of the painted concrete exterior walls recall adobe construction with modern materials. The two-story building is five bays wide and two bays deep with an central portico and

entrance hall. Although designed as office space, the scale of the Administration Building recalls domestic rather than

institutional architecture.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair. Many historic features are intact, but damaged due to

vandalism or deferred maintenance.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions:

2. Foundations: Concrete, with a plain water table. The foundation is

slightly higher on the northeast side of the building due the topography of the site. The date "1910" is incised into the

foundation at the east corner of the main elevation.

¹⁷Soennichsen, 161-164; Hussey, 29-30. For an inventory and appraisal from this period see "Fort McDowell - Angel Island, W-CALIF-191," NARA - Pacific Regional Office, San Bruno, California, RG 270 - Records of the War Assets Administration, Office of Real Property, Real Property Disposal Case Files, 1946-49, Box 65.

¹⁸See Soennichsen, 165-173.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are ten-inch-thick concrete with a

smooth finish coat painted tan. Plain pilasters are located at

the corners of the buildings.

4. Structural system: The administration building has reinforced concrete

exterior walls and wood interior partitions and floors. Four heavy timber trusses support the roof and allow a large

uninterrupted space on the second floor.

5. Porches, stoops: An one-story reinforced concrete portico stretches across

the center three bays on the main, or northeast, elevation. Four concrete steps with knee walls on either side are aligned with the center entrance. Low, rectangular piers are continuous with the concrete porch floor and low porch walls. The solid concrete walls have a few discrete drains

at the floor level. Wood lattice filled the rectangular spaces between the piers. The rectangular porch columns have plain bases and capitals. The entablature has coping along the top edge, which rises to form a shallow triangular pediment over the stairs at the center. The frieze of the entablature is only ornamented by a raised circle at either end and a raised panel in the pediment incised with

"Administration Bvilding." The lettering style suggests a Classical influence. Now missing, the half-gable wood porch roof would have been hidden by the substantial

concrete entablature.

6. Chimneys: The administration building has two concrete internal

chimneys. One is located in the center of the roof slope on

the northwest end of the building. This chimney is

reinforced with a metal tie-rod connected to the roof ridge. Another smaller chimney projects from the rear roof slope

near the ridge. This chimney is located close to the

southeast end of the building.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The administration building originally had one exterior

doorway at the center bay of the main elevation. This doorway has a double door with a movable five-light transom. The original wood doors had two horizontal recessed panels below a large area of glazing. There is no

applied door molding.

The frame rear addition had additional exterior doors, but it is no longer extant.

b. Windows:

All of the window openings have simple concrete sills and no applied molding. The windows are wood, one over one, double hung sash with an ogee-curve projection at the bottom corners of the upper sash. The openings are regular in size and spacing on the northeast and northwest elevations, but irregularly spaced on the other two elevations. On the southeast elevation, the window on the first floor close to the south corner was added in 1928. On the southwest, or rear, elevation, four original window openings were enlarged to create doorways into the addition.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The roof is low-pitched gable on hip with a covering of red terra cotton Mission tiles.¹⁹ At the ridge line the gable ends are filled with wood louvers.

b. Cornice, eaves:

The administration building roof sits on a flat wood cornice. The overhanging eaves are open and the exposed rafter ends have a notched curve design characteristic of Mission Revival architecture. A metal gutter on the edge of the eaves drains into down spouts attached to the wall of the main elevation on either side of the porch. Gutters for the porch roof connected into these down spouts as well.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

See measured drawings HABS No. CA-2721-G for complete plans and sections of the administration building. There are two floors, with no basement or attic. The administration building is rectangular in plan with the main entrance at the center gable of the long side. The center entrance hall leads to a transverse hall and the first floor offices. Three-quarters of the second floor is one large office space, with a smaller office, stair hall and toilet on the southeast side of the floor.

¹⁹A memorandum dated June 2, 1910 recommended using "#2 Mission" tile on the administration building roof, as had already been done at the post exchange. See NARA, RG 92, Entry 89, Box 6407, File No. 254543.

2. Stairways:

There is one open-well staircase with quarter-pace landings located at the southeast end of the transverse center hall. The newel post is a square column with recessed panels and a flat newel cap. The banister has a molded hand rail and slender Doric column balusters. The stanchions at the turn of the stairs are plain and square. The steps have a tread return with a piece of applied molding below.

3. Flooring:

There is tongue and groove wood flooring throughout the administration building.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

The walls and ceilings throughout the administration building are plaster on lath, although asbestos tile drop ceilings have been added. The southeast wall of the entrance hall is wood paneling with windows and slots for the post office. The typical baseboard is a flat wood board with a cap molding and quarter round toe molding. Many of the first floor offices have wood picture molding.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The wood moldings around the interior doorways are flat with an applied ovolo molding. The interior doors are painted wood with five recessed horizontal panels and a one light movable (bottom hinge) transom above. A dutch door was created for the opening between the transverse hall and the post office by sawing a five-panel door in half.

b. Windows:

The interior of the window openings have flat, painted wood molding with an applied ovolo molding on the outer edge. A painted fixed sash window is located between the toilet room and the post office. After the rear addition blocked the windows and natural light on that side of the building, in 1928 a fixed sash window opening was added between the hall and the file room to provide borrowed light.

6. Hardware:

The surviving plain metal door and window hardware is typical of the early twentieth century.

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, ventilation:

The administration building was heated with a steam radiator system. The cast-iron radiators with stylized leaf ornamentation were made by the American Radiator Company. Steam for heat was supplied by the central heating plant located in the basement of the mess hall building.

b. Lighting: This structure was wired for electric lighting during construction.

A number of early twentieth century pendant light fixtures, with

opaque glass shades, are still extant here.

c. Plumbing: A "toilet room" is located in the east corner of each floor. Original

fixtures still extant include a wall-mounted porcelain-coated iron sink with two porcelain-coated column legs supporting the front

corners.

III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

Original drawings of the Fort McDowell Administration Building were located in "Plans for Standard Army Post Buildings, 1903-10," an unpublished volume filed in the National Archives, Washington, D.C..²⁰

B. Early Views:

92-CS - Panoramas of Army Camps, "Ft. McDowell Recruit Depot," c. 1911, Box 2, NARA Still Picture Branch, College Park, MD. Several of the concrete buildings, including the barracks and some of the officer's quarters, are under construction in this large panoramic photograph. The exteriors of the post exchange and administration buildings are complete.

A series of c. 1920 postcard views of the East Garrison buildings are available in the Angel Island State Park collection, including the "Headquarters," or Administration Building.

C. Bibliography:

See notes for a listing of relevant archival materials from Record Groups 92 and 77 at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland.

Finley, Captain John P. "Discharging a Philippine Army, In Four Parts" *Sunset Magazine* 9-10:5-6, 1-2 (September-December 1902): 293-308, 373-384, 15-25, 116-126.

Hussey, John A. "Fort McDowell - Report on Application for an Historical Monument,"

²⁰ Plans for Standard Army Post Buildings, 1903-10," National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group 77 Office of the Army Corps of Engineers (hereafter RG 77), Entry 412, Volume 1. It is not clear whether this volume illustrates plans used at multiple army posts or simply examples of typical building types constructed at certain posts. All of the other administration buildings illustrated were much larger structures with Georgian Revival motifs.

Prepared for War Assets Administration (April 1949), typescript in Angel Island Park files.

Soennichsen, John *Miwoks to Missiles: A History of Angel Island*. Tiburon, CA: Angel Island Association, 2001.

IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of Fort McDowell was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division of the National Park Service, E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. The project was sponsored by the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Rusty Areias, Director; and by Angel Island State Park, Nick Franco, Superintendent. Project planning was coordinated by Paul Dolinsky, Chief, HABS. The field recording was conducted and the measured drawings were produced during 2001 by project supervisor Mark Schara, HABS Architect; by HABS Architect Naomi Hernandez; and by architects Christine M. Odom (University of Texas) and Gregory J. Sokaris (State University of New York at Buffalo). Historical reports were produced during 2002 by Lisa Pfueller Davidson, HABS Historian. Large format photographs were produced during 2002-03 by James Rosenthal, HABS Photographer. Assistance in all phases of this project was provided by the staff of Angel Island State Park. See related documentation, HABS No. CA-1841, Camp Reynolds, for information about the West Garrison portion of the island.